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Chapter 1: The Discourse of Realism in the North: Two Perspectives

If the name Nietzsche spread in the North through Denmark and Georg Brandes, so previously had the initial theoretical impulse for modern Scandinavian realism. The discussion that follows will attempt to introduce the complexities of the particular brand of nineteenth century Scandinavian realism as presented by two of its more clearly defined theorists. The program put forward by Brandes, and the objections to this program articulated by Herman Bang, do not necessarily depict the actuality of the Scandinavian Modern Breakthrough. These two theories of realism were chosen because they illustrate the complexities of any claim to represent the *real* in a society where the desire to be modern carries with it the embrace of change. For how can one claim to depict the actual if actuality is seen to be evanescent? Brandes and Bang both factor change into their programs, but provide different answers to this question. Our analysis of their attempts at finding a solution brings us to two more questions germane to the problem of realism: namely, what is the relationship of realist art to the life of the community whose likeness it claims to depict, and what is the relationship of the artist to the community he addresses? For the notion of the real is conventional and dependent upon social agreement.¹ These questions can be seen to be the essential problematic of realism as a piece of modernity,² and it is within these parameters that Scandinavian realists theorized. It is the tenor as well as the substance of their solutions that open the door for the breakdown of the realist imperative of the initial phase of Scandinavian literary modernity.³

¹ No matter what theory of realism one accepts, it is a common notion that realist display needs recognition of its »reality effect« (Roland Barthes) by the audience. As this study is not about realism, per se, I will define the term as understood by two theorists of Scandinavian realism, Georg Brandes and Herman Bang.

² For another about discussion of the relationship of realism to Scandinavian modernity, see MOI: 2006, 17–36.

³ While the substance of both Brandes' and Bangs' theories differs, they shared a belief that modernization had created the conditions for an aesthetic based on the notion of the »real« and the »new«.

Brandes and Bang: Political versus Aesthetic Realism

Realism came late to the north. Though it certainly can be argued that there is an earlier realist tendency, the terms »realism« and »naturalism« had a polemical resonance in the cultural debates of the latter part of the 19th century in Scandinavia. Due to a prolific expenditure of energy by Georg Brandes, the terms were employed to connote the use of cultural production as an agent for social change. Brandes saw the structure of his society as calcified by a reaction against the cataclysmic changes brought on by the French Revolution, the rebellions of 1848, and the ascendancy of the natural sciences. He looked to literature as an important source of cultural enlightenment.⁴ For Brandes, the writer had an active role to play in shaping the history of his time.

Theorizing in the 1870's about the social impetus for a realistic depiction of society in the North, Brandes' writings had a clearly stated political intention.⁵ Moved by his teacher, Hippolyte Taine and his own translations of John Stuart Mill,⁶ he crafted the polemic that inspired the literary avant-garde's turn to realism, calling for a literature that debated the problems of society. As a result, realist literature would come to be seen as democratic, oppositional, and feminist. Ironically, Brandes himself held a lifelong reservation towards the »advisability of majority

4 Brandes makes a Kantian gesture by connecting writing with the public responsibility of the intellectual. The enlightened writer is the mature writer who contributes to the maturation of his society. See Immanuel Kant, »Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?«.

5 The general depiction of the politics of Scandinavian modern realism is liberal, democratic, and oppositional. Strindberg is often painted as the exception, more radical until 1886, more reactionary thereafter, with a return to *Christianity and socialism* in his later years. Brandes is often painted as the champion of individual rights and a feminist. His embrace of Nietzsche is treated as a change, a charge which he denied. It is important for our study to realize that, like other liberals such as Mill and Toqueville, there is an elitist element to Brandes' conception of freedom which gives us something to grasp when we see that his work consists of a gallery of literary portraits. His conception of literary history is a depiction of its great *men* (Nietzsche's monumental history). See also Pil Dahlerup, *Det moderne gennembruds kvinder*, for a criticism of Brandes' paternal feminism.

6 See KNUDSEN: 1985, ASMUNDSSON: 1981, and Brandes own memoir, *Levned* (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1908) for depictions of Brandes formative intellectual years. Brandes called Taine »master« and translated Mill's *The Subjugation of Women* and *Utilitarianism* into Danish. He wrote an essay on Mill in 1879.

rule,⁷ yet despite his concerns he waged a steady battle against what he regarded as conservative forces in Denmark.⁸ Brandes' lectures were almost always well attended and as often as not, a source of heated debate.

The first compelling theoretical reaction to Brandes' programmatic description of realist activism which was not driven by personal and political animosity was articulated by the novelist Herman Bang, who objected to what he saw as a conflation of aesthetic and ethical impulses. While both men sought to encourage a Scandinavian connection to larger European tendencies, the difference in their emphases is symptomatic of the divergence of their positions on what is *real*. Bang saw the realist imperative as an aesthetic adjunct to the positivistic claim of objective observation, yet his rejection of any possibility of a unified perceptual field skewed this paradigm. As a result, Bang posited a perspectival positivism where the contradictions between the observer and the observed serve to undermine the very truth claim of realist depiction itself. Therefore, Bang saw realism as merely an aesthetic adornment that provides the appropriate form for the literary artifact, which serves as a historical fragment of a moment in a culture's development. His theoretical conception of a realist depiction of everyday life defines the literary artifact as a shard found amongst the ruins of the recent past. The fragmented consciousness of the modern writer, however, prevents the pot from being reconstructed. Both Bang's and Brandes' positions need to be elaborated upon to illustrate what is at stake when the validity of a realist aesthetic is questioned when Nietzsche's thought arrives in Scandinavia at the tail end of the nineteenth century.

Georg Brandes: Living and Dead Literature

Vor Litteratur er som et lille Kapel i en stor Kirke, den har sit Alter, men Hovedalteret findes ikke her.

(Our literature is like a little chapel in a great church, it has its altar, but the main altar is not found here.)⁹

7 ASMUNDSSON: 1981, 215.

8 Brandes' most formidable target was the Lutheran state church. Brandes' position was precarious, as he was a Jew by birth and an atheist by choice. Some of the most violent opposition to Brandes' lectures and writings was colored by anti-Semitism.

9 BRANDES: 1984, 21, »Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen« (1872). Translation mine.

34 THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE NIETZSCHE RECEPTION IN SCANDINAVIA

Ich höre mit Vergnügen, dass unsre Sonne in rascher Bewegung gegen das Sternbild des Herkules hin begriffen ist: und ich hoffe, dass der Mensch auf dieser Erde es darin der Sonne gleich thut. Und wir voran, wir guten Europäer!

(I'm glad to hear that our sun is moving rapidly towards the constellation of Hercules: and I hope that the people of this earth will act like the sun. With us in front, we good Europeans!)¹⁰

In 1872, Brandes gave a series of lectures on a subject that was to become the most pressing preoccupation of his long and influential career. These presentations, which would become a part of Brandes' magnum opus, *Hovedstrømninger i det 19de Aarhundredes europæiske Litteratur*, addressed the state of the relationship of Scandinavian letters to the progressive elements of European thought. Believing that the scientific and political revolutions of the early part of the nineteenth century formed the basis of a common European culture, he conceived the role of the author as a localized engagement with larger, more universal historical movements. It is here that we can discern the origins of the paradox that would later inflect the Nietzsche reception in the north: on the one hand he was regarded as a continuation of a shared pan-European Project called the Enlightenment, on the other he represented the particularity of the individual set against the moribund propriety of the collective. In other words, Nietzsche was seen as an exemplar of inevitable collective movement and the epitome of a unique personality in opposition to the herd. Brandes was blind to this paradox, as he understood this contradiction from the standpoint of the avant-garde, from the urge to move forward. He believed that there are some individuals who are in advance of a changing notion of reality. These individuals create values that will later shape the collective understanding of reality in any given point in time. Even in the early 1870's Brandes' realists were in vital anticipation of a »select reality« to come. The depiction of reality was for Brandes in anticipation of its own manifestation in concrete social practices.

A good fourteen years before Nietzsche would write the second of our epigraphs, Brandes saw the imperative of an expanding sense of identity, a European identity. When Strindberg read Nietzsche's aphorism, he was so moved by the notion that he would write the word *framåt* (forwards), a military expression, in the margins of his own copy of *Beyond Good*

¹⁰ NIETZSCHE: KSA 5, 1993, 183, Aphorism 243. The translation is from NORMAN: 2005, 134.

and Evil.¹¹ While Nietzsche's words would fuel Strindberg's aspirations in late 1888, Brandes planted the seeds of this militancy many years earlier and it was his imperative that would delineate the parameters of a program that was to shape Scandinavian literature until the close of the 1880's. The movement that began to chart the course of the *good European* has come to be known in Scandinavia by a phrase of Brandes' own coinage, »The Modern Breakthrough«.

Det, at en Litteratur i vore Dage lever, viser sig i, at den sætter Problemer under Debat ... At en Litteratur Intet sætter under Debat er det samme som, at den er ifærd med at tabe al Betydning.

(That a literature can be considered to be living in our day, is shown by the fact that it places problems under debate ... That a literature does not place anything under debate is tantamount to it being on the way to losing all meaning.)¹²

Brandes set up a polemical opposition between the literature of the late romantic period and what he saw as the imperative of contemporary letters. This opposition was described as the difference between a living and a dead literature. For Brandes, a living literature carries meaning that it derives by virtue of its engagement with existentially relevant, collective issues. This gives literature a historical relevance, which it attains through active social intervention. The failure to enter into debate is the marker of a dead literature. In other words, the quality of a dead literature is its social irrelevance.

Brandes' strategy of opposing a living to a dead literature reflected his belief that the literary arts had a role to play in shaping the direction of political development. He believed that a living literature had the power to influence the course of historical development towards the inevitability of what we can easily understand as the bourgeois paradox: as national societies become more universal, (in Brandes mind, here read more European), the possibility for individualization increases.¹³ In other words, a living literature intervenes in and helps shape the course of contemporary events, which are moving towards the age of individual freedom, while a dead literature remains in the past, wears the mask of pro-

¹¹ Strindberg's copy of the book can be found in the Birger Mörner collection housed in the library at the University of Örebro.

¹² BRANDES: 1984, 24.

¹³ This is certainly in anticipation of the ideology of globalization, or more properly defined, global capitalism.

priety, and is politically and socially quietist. It is as if he said with Nietzsche in a quintessential modernist moment: »As my father, I am dead.«

The specific target of Brandes' attack was the *biedermeier* aesthetic that accompanied *idealism*. He argued that this species of literature no longer possessed the vitality necessary to address the complexities of the contemporary world. He considered the majority of his contemporaries to be in reaction to the larger European Enlightenment and he claimed that the great revolutionary movements in social, political, and literary life had yet to take hold in Scandinavia. According to Brandes, the effect that these movements had heretofore had on local culture was through the reactive structure of resistance that permeated society on all levels of social intercourse. In confrontation with this reactive structure, Brandes hoped to spawn a countermovement whose »Slagord var den frie Tanke« (slogan was freedom of thought).¹⁴ In other words, the resistance to the changes brought on by the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the social upheavals of 1848, and the rise of the natural sciences, had permeated society and contributed to a type of cultural production that no longer had any vitality. Brandes understood this resistance to be a type of intellectual deafness, closing off the possibility of the use of the knowledge and development from the outside. The first result of this deafness was the inability to address relevant issues. The second result was that literary culture had been arrested and the effect of this dormancy was that »intet Problem af almindelig human eller social Natur formaaer at vække nogen Interesse« (no problem of collective human or social nature is able to awaken any interest).¹⁵ According to Brandes, Scandinavia was asleep.

Brandes polemicized for a poetic production that was not a source of comfort, but instead took part in a struggle for social change: a literature

¹⁴ BRANDES: 1984, 22. Translation mine.

¹⁵ See pg. 24 of »Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen«: The complete citation reads: »Den poetiske Production er saagodt som fuldstændigt standset, og intet Problem af almindelig human eller social Natur formaaer at vække nogen Interesse eller fremkalde anden Discussion end Dagpressens og Døgnlitteraturen. En stærk original Productivitet have vi ikke nogensinde besiddet, nu er en næsten fuldstændig Mangel paa Tilegnelse af fremmed Aandsliv traadt til, og den aandelig Døvhed har som Døvheden hos den Døvstumme medført Stumhed.« (Poetic production is as good as completely arrested, and no problem of collective human or social nature is able to awaken any interest or call forth any discussion besides that in the popular press. We have never been able to call a highly original productivity our own, now there is nearly a complete lack of the influence of foreign intellectual life, and this intellectual deafness has like the deafness of the deaf mute brought with it muteness.)

that lives, that asserts its vitality by virtue of addressing the life led by those who read it, a literature of flesh and blood, not a literature of the abstract ideal.¹⁶ For Brandes, this necessitated a political realism designed to break through the barriers erected by literary norms inflected by an abstract idealism, which he felt merely echoed the conditions of established social intercourse. He called for works that attempted to break through the complacency, thereby creating a breach in the wall of containment erected by a culture of reaction. He urged his fellow Danes to realize that their little chapel is contained within the secular church of enlightened thought and rational action. He demanded that literature express the ideals of the Enlightenment through a concrete representation of everyday life written by a cadre of authors who created values as good *Europeans*.

Brandes' version of a living literature was embodied. He criticized poetic production that abstracts bodies and souls and condemned such literature as decadent. He appealed to the »we« of the younger generation to create a poetry that serves freedom of thought and a free humanity.¹⁷ These young writers were, for Brandes, the avant-garde that could break with a literature whose »Opgave historisk er endt« (task has ended historically).¹⁸ In order to accomplish this, these young representatives of the avant-garde must pay heed to the tangible aspects of the world in which they lived with full knowledge that their understanding of reality was only

¹⁶ See footnote 37 and pg. 31 of Georg BRANDES: 1984.

¹⁷ »... vi ville den frie Tanke og den frie Humanitet ... Det er ikke saameget ydre Love, der behøve at forandres, om end ogsaa de, som det er den hele Samfundsbetragtning, som den yngre Slægt fra Grunden af maa omforme og opløse, før en ny Litteratur kan skyde op.« This translates: »... we want free thinking and a free humanity ... It is not so much external laws that need to change, though this as well, but the entire way of viewing society, which the younger generation may re-shape and prepare from the ground up before a new literature can emerge. Georg BRANDES: 1984, 32. Brandes goes on to say that this task can come about from the flowing of many streams whose source is the ideas of progress and revolution. Their task is to halt reaction. It is important to note that Brandes emphasizes the diversity of expression from a central source. He sees the Enlightenment as a point of freedom. He does not call for one way of forwarding his cause nor does he posit a confluence of the many streams that flow from the source. His critics, however, will polemicize against what they present as the one-dimensionality of Brandes' program.

¹⁸ Ibid., 32.

in anticipation of something to come.¹⁹ Brandes' notion of a living literature demanded that poetic production engage with *life* as it is lived, not as it is abstractly conceived in the mind. He called for an avant-garde literature of praxis. This is not, however, a simple materialist conception of culture. There was a dialectical component to Brandes' program that cannot be ignored. This dialectic informs us that Brandes did not hold the view that realism merely reflects the ideology of the culture in which it is produced.

Brandes' dialectic of literary production unfolded as follows: Social interaction conditions the cultural production of a given society's poets, but these authors can influence actual change through an active self-conscious engagement with the conditions of their material life. In this way, the abstracted notion of the individual is brought down to earth and the province of conceptual thought is enlivened through its embodiment in a realistic depiction of the quotidian. In this movement of thought lay the difference between Brandes' political realism and a realism that merely claims to depict things as they *actually exist*. Brandes did not call for a realism that held a mirror up to society, but one that could change what was considered to be real.

His program rested upon the belief that the historical purpose and the ideals of an epoch are found in the revaluation of the conditions of everyday life, and it is only through the depiction of this that an author can tap into the stream of historical change. As he wrote in his essay on Shakespeare of 1870, »Udformet indtil det uendeligt Smaa som Sansningen sammenfatter, indeholder den det uendeligt Store, i hvilket Tanken udmunder, naar den søger en hel historisk Epokes Aarsag og Ideal« (Up to now the elaboration of *the infinitely small, which the senses re-assemble, contains the infinitely great in which the thought concludes*, when it seeks an entire historical epoch's cause and ideal).²⁰ Realism was, for Brandes, a political act that could transform the society that it depicted. However, the ideas that are to carry this transformation must break through the slumber of detached abstraction in order to exert their force »re-assembling« the concrete details of the particularity of experience in thought.

¹⁹ This aspect of Brandes' program carries a Hegelian idealistic residue where consciousness and self-consciousness anticipate the concrete manifestation of geist (spirit or intellect).

²⁰ Georg Brandes: 1984, 18, *Det uendeligt Smaa og det uendeligt Store i Poesien*.

We can now answer what was modern about Brandes' conception of the »Modern Breakthrough« and what it purported to break through. Brandes called for a sharp break from the literature of the previous era. This new literature was to be political, embodied, and directed by the ideals of the Enlightenment. It was to depict contemporary life in the spirit of free scientific inquiry and to contribute to the unfolding of individual freedom. This was a literature that would be produced by authors aware of their historical situation and who actively participated in and influenced the direction of societal change. These authors were to attempt a merger of literature and the social life from which it was created.²¹ This merger, in turn, would create a new form of social interaction that Brandes hoped would break through the wall of containment erected by the localized reaction to the currents of change in European history. In this way, he hoped to inspire a movement that would leave the little chapel of Danish literature and enter the great secular church of Enlightenment thought. For Brandes, the vitality of this species of realist literature resided in its ability to remove the mask from the face of propriety in order to anticipate what would be considered *real* at some future date.

The weakness of Brandes' program resided in his belief that history involved a necessary progression and that literature had a mimetic property that could manifestly effect real change in a linear fashion. His own disappointment over the inability of his program to attain the results that he envisioned would later color his concept of »Aristocratic Radicalism«. By the time he wrote his essay on Nietzsche at the end of the 1880's, the significance of individual resistance would take on a new meaning in his work. In a sense, for Brandes, Nietzsche would become a figure who represented the tragic individual, doomed to be ignored because of his very individuality, whose power becomes the wellspring of both his value for posterity and his demise in his own historical moment. Brandes' ambivalent reception of the philosopher shows the effects of a collision between his own work and the social *reality* whose depiction he sought to inspire. His reassessment of the possibilities and efficacy of an interventionist literature in the spring of 1888 will mark his own understanding of the »failure« of political realism in Scandinavia.

21 See Peter BÜRGER: 1984 for a depiction of the avant-garde's attempts to make art that crosses over into »life«.

Herman Bang: The Realist as Aesthetic Historian, History as a Novel of Fragments

Realism er en Form, ikke en Tendens; en Methode, der kan sætte gamle Ting i en ny Belysning, ikke en Opdagelse, paa hvilken Forfatterne har taget Patent.

(Realism is a form, not a tendency; a method, which can place old things under new light, not a discovery on which authors have taken out a patent).²²

Herman Bang belonged to the generation of writers to whom Brandes directed his appeal for a new literature. Though he was primarily a novelist, his critical reflections on the theoretical conditions of realist literary production anticipated an aesthetic reaction to Brandes' program by the generation of the 1890's. In 1879, seven years after Brandes' *Indledning til Emigrantlitteraturen*, Bang published a series of articles, which collectively bear the title, *Portrætsudier og Aforismer* (*Portrait Studies and Aphorisms*).²³ Three of these articles were grouped together and given the name *Realisme og Realister* (*Realism and Realists*). Bang introduced this series of articles by stating that they are tied to the struggle for and address the burning questions of »den nye litteratur« (the new literature). Like Brandes, his stalking horse was idealism, but he had another target in mind as well: Brandes' notion of a self-consciously political realism. The point of disagreement lay in the question of what is a living and what is a dead literature, in the very notion of how an author attains historical significance. If Brandes urged authors to take an active role as shapers of history, Bang regarded the historical significance of literature to reside in its choice of style. One could say that if Brandes called for literature to break through into modern life, Bang called for literature to allow modern life to determine its form. Bang's objection to Brandes' program consisted in what he saw as the latter's insistence on a content-driven literature. For Bang, the effect of modern historical conditions could be discerned by the form of the novel itself; he saw history as a novel of fragments, and the novel as one of the fragments of this history.

The question of values was the crux of Bang's disagreement with Brandes. While they both agreed that realism is the form that best conveys the historical conditions of the society in which they lived; they

²² Herman BANG: 1879, 17. Translation mine.

²³ This is also the year that saw the publication of Strindberg's *Röda rummet* (*The Red Room*) and Ibsen's *Et dukkehjem* (*A Doll House*).

disagreed about how literature could manifest its significance as a historical force. Like Brandes, Bang felt that idealism was an attempt to stand above the conditions of the contemporary world. He argued that a writer engages with the historical specificity of his contemporary environment and that it was a mistake to try to rise above these conditions.²⁴ However, Bang implicitly criticized Brandes for inserting ethics into the debate. For Bang there was a difference between realism and the literature of political tendency. From Bang's perspective, realism was detached from ethics; it is an aesthetic theory, not an ethical determination.²⁵ It follows that the prime characteristic of realism is its concern with technique. Thus Bang argued indirectly that the novelist contributes to writing the history of his times through his use of a form that is a reflection of the characteristics of his contemporary world. Realism does not break through into contemporary life; as a form it reflects its conditions. The writer does not shape history; he creates an artifact of his time. In an inversion of Brandes' avant-gardist ideology, Bang argued the literary artifact is most representative of its contemporary world when life breaks through into aesthetics and determines its form. However, despite this, realist display does not necessarily depict a true likeness.

Bang stated that realism is not a photograph of society. He urged the novelist to learn from the painter and create work that has »en Portræt-malers Omhu« (the care of a portraitist).²⁶ The realist's stylistic choices should factor in the relationship between the life depicted and the aesthetic limitations of the medium used for this depiction. For Bang, it was the same insights into the human condition that have accompanied modernity that highlighted the inability of the author to accurately depict the emotional life of his characters.

Bang argued that Realism is by its very nature a reduction of the »reality« it attempts to portray, and as a consequence, the realist cannot depict the motivations behind the actions of his characters.²⁷ The realist is not a

24 BANG: 1879, 12.

25 Ibid., 13: »Realism er en Kunstscole.« This translates: »Realism is a school of art.«

26 Ibid., 15. Whether this was his intention or not, this is an ironic choice of terminology when one considers that Bang was opposing Brandes who organized his work into portraits of literary personalities.

27 Ibid. 15. »Hvad man opdagde, var det, at alle Følelser er sammensatte, og Følelselivet er uendelig mere kompliceret, end man tidligere antaget ... Det gjælder derfor ikke blot om at opfinde, men om at fortælle; Livet er, ret betragtet, langt rigere end vor

scientist as suggested by Émile Zola; he is a portraitist, and as such, he allows the complexity of his subject to manifest itself through suggestion, through coloration and tonality. According to Bang, realist authors do not speak for their characters, »Forfatterne lader tale, de tale ikke« (authors allow speech, they do not speak).²⁸ This is a key point for understanding Bang's notions of the aesthetic reduction of life, the internalization of historical conditions that lead to the production of a fragmentary historical artifact and how it would differ from a Nietzschean notion of »select reality«. This is the fulcrum upon which his criticism of Brandes was balanced. For if realism is a conscious reduction of the complexity of modern life, then ethical commentary and determination in the fictional life of a realist novel are a species of idealism, which fails to respond to the demands of realist representation. These demands are of the senses, a matter of form rather than content. Bang understood realism to be a literature determined by a realism of perception, rather than by engagement with social conditions from the distance of omniscient narration. »Livet moralisere[r]« (Life moralize[s]), not the authors, »... fordi de tror, at Livs Fakta ere mere overtalende end deres private Udtalelser og Fremførelsen af deres private Mening.« (... for they believe that the facts of life are more convincing than their private pronouncements and the forwarding of their private opinion.)²⁹

Bang's position can be summarized in the following manner: the realist necessarily reduces the complexity of life in order to depict a fragment of its totality. Furthermore, because of this necessary reduction, realism should be a purely aesthetic principle that takes distance from value judgments in order to represent life without the distortion of ethical determination. Realism demands that the author allow phenomena to pass through the realm of the senses and consequently realism is a matter of the construction of a style, which reflects the state of human perception in the modern world. Judgment is limited to these stylistic considerations,

Fantasi.« My translation reads: »What one discovered, is that all feelings are composite, and the life of the feelings is infinitely more complicated than one previously assumed ... This entails not only invention, but also narration. Life is, when rightly regarded, much richer than our imagination.«

²⁸ Ibid., 16.

²⁹ Ibid., 16.

and ethical determinations are left to »life« broadly defined.³⁰ The realist work reflects a fragment of »life« and becomes an artifact that reflects the nature of the time in which it was composed. This is how Bang's theory of realism delimits its own claim to depict the real. If the realist cannot create a photograph, an objective representation, the very notion of verisimilitude is reduced to a claim for the accurate representation of a perspective. For Bang, this was the condition of the possibility of knowledge allowed by the modern social environment. This is what he considered to be *real* for the modern subject. It was as if he posited: *life provides the possibility of creating a limited textual understanding of its manifold events*. From this perspective, realist representation is the depiction of the fragment experienced by the artist as it is aestheticized by formal considerations or style. In addition, style is subject to historical considerations, and changes in artistic form have an organic teleological trajectory. The work of the author is determined by his historical condition. Literature gives an era its aesthetic shape and style is an ever-changing reflection of the contemporaneous world.

En nutids Forfatter digter ikke ud af en Stemning, der næste Nu kan forsvinde og forflygtes, saa at, den ufødte Digtning's Ophav er vidsket ud og blevet borte; han skriver ud af en Skat af Erindring, Minder, og Iagttagelse, hvis Konsekventer han nøjagtig søger at uddrage; og en Samvittighedsfuld undersøgelse af et Fænomen er hans befrugtende Inspiration.

(A contemporary author does not compose from a mood, for the next moment is fleeting and can disappear, so that the unborn writing's origin is whispered and is then gone. He writes from a trove of memory, recollection, and observation whose consistency he carefully tries to evince. A conscientious examination of a phenomenon is the fertility of his inspiration.)³¹

The citation above reveals the logic of Bang's approach. The reduction of life that aesthetic realism performs is now given its location in the individual informed by his past experiences. The artist's perception of his environment is inconstant and subject to the transience of modern life.

³⁰ This is a key aspect for understanding Bang's quarrel with Brandes. Bang's realists would be at worst politically quietist and at best indirectly critical. For if the author allows »life« to determine ethics and his work is the result of his perception of this, then he would re-produce the ideological structures of his environment without interrogating them. This is not unlike the later Lukács's reading of bourgeois realism and Balzac in particular. However, Bang's notion of the fragmentation of perception brought on by modernity sets him apart. Unlike Lukács he does not see realism as constructing a totality constructed with contradictions.

³¹ Ibid., 83. My translation.

As a result of the ever-changing nature of this environment, the artist must take recourse to a more reliable perspective. Bang posited that this could be found in a trove of memory and observation. He argues that the realist must then use this perspective, which he finds in his own experience, to consciously draw out the consequences of his own experience of phenomena. This process should have »paa samme Tid Scenens Kraft og Livets Sandhed« (simultaneously the power of Theater and life's truth).³² Representation of the *real* requires the dramatization of the individual's perspective. Despite his perspectivalism, Bang's realist is Nietzsche's modern decadent, the artist as an actor. To understand this, we only need to recall Nietzsche's critique of Wagner and theater in 1888.³³

Bang called for a literature that represented bits and pieces of everyday life, a literature that would tell the story of individual lives in the manner that they are experienced, with a »nervøse Form« (nervous form).³⁴ In other words, »mer eller mindre fragmentarisk at fortælle et Livs Historie er jo Realismens Opgave« (realism's task is to narrate a life's history in a more or less fragmented way).³⁵ For Bang, realism shed new light on old things; it was a narrative style in which the evanescent flickering of the moment seemingly emitted a steady light by virtue of an illusion illuminated through the screen of the author's recollection. Representation of phenomena is anchored in the perspective of the perceiver. The task of composition is to order the fragmentary nature of perception into a composite. For Bang, the historical conditions that shape the understanding of the necessity of a realist aesthetic had forced the realist to rely on the self as the location of constancy in the face of the changes brought about by modernity. It was in this manner that Bang anticipated the revolt of the generation of the nineties against Brandes' program. With his claim that the novel is a historical artifact and his location of reality in the perceptions of the individual, Bang opened the door for the notion of the individual as the authentic bearer of historical memory.

³² Ibid., 37. My translation.

³³ See *Der Fall Wagner*, NIETZSCHE: KSA 6, 1988d.

³⁴ BANG: 1879, 28. My translation.

³⁵ Ibid., 105. My translation.

The Discourse of Scandinavian Realism Anticipates the Nietzsche Reception

The theories of Georg Brandes and Herman Bang illustrate the complexities of any claim to represent the *real* in a society where the desire to be modern carries with it the embrace of change. For how does one depict the actual and the individual's relationship to it if actuality is seen to be evanescent?³⁶ Brandes and Bang both factor change into their programs, but provide different answers to this problem. Our analysis of their attempts at finding a solution brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of the section on realism: namely, what is the relationship of art and the artist to the life of the community whose likeness it claims to depict? It is the tenor as well as the substance of their solutions that open the door for the breakdown of the realist imperative of the initial phase of Scandinavian literary modernity.

Brandes assumed an activist stance in the 1870's. He envisioned a literature that acted as an agent of change in a society where cultural and social life had calcified. This called for an activated authorial subjectivity that engages with its environment and creates a literature that breaks through into life, thereby imbuing the cultural imagination with an image of what is real. But a problem arose when Brandes described his cultural environment as being deaf, moribund, and shackled by the chains of propriety: How can a realist literature avoid the snare of merely doubling the state of social relations as they stand? How could it avoid containment?

Brandes understood the history of his times to be a struggle between the forces of the Enlightenment and the forces of reaction. When he turned his gaze to the literature of the 19th century, he denigrated what the great Hungarian critic Georg Lukács would later call the »abstract idealism« of late romantic letters.³⁷ Instead, Brandes posited an author who

36 Brandes and Bang's insistence on depiction as opposed to performance is symptomatic of the problematic aspects of their theories. While both men pointed to the performativity of »modern realism,« they failed to fully articulate this aspect of their conception of realist literature. The notion of performativity is also obscure in the anti-realist polemic.

37 See LUKÁCS: 1971, 97–III. According to Lukács, the protagonist of abstract idealism is marked by »[t]he complete absence of an inwardly experienced problematic [that] transforms such a soul into pure activity« (99). This condition is due to the misrecognition of the external world for the internal world of contemplation. In this way the eter-

had a very different relationship to his place in history. He imagined a group of artists who could revitalize their societies through appropriating the concept of the *real* for the future by placing the mask of being on becoming through naming, thereby transforming the collective understanding of actuality.

Brandes' answer to the question of containment informs us about the meaning of his term, *the Modern Breakthrough*. For the realist, according to Brandes, creates a literature that breaks through the propriety, the habitual interaction of his society and modernizes his environment. This is why Brandes called this species of production a living literature. He envisioned a literature that vitalizes its environment by exposing the deadness of habitual interaction, and attacks propriety in social production. In theory, Brandes' literary realist is an active participant in the historical process. He names actuality and thereby shapes it. Brandesian realism is an agonistic form, which debates and takes possession of a claim to actuality for the sake of the future. It unmask propriety, only to mask social relations once more by imposing a shape upon them, pointing to a future possibility. The realism Brandes envisioned creates the conception of the *real* for a free society yet to be realized. But it was not such an oxymoronic figure as a Utopian realism would be. It is anchored in describing concrete social relations as they were. He called for a literature that actually engages the present in order to create an unspecified future shaped by adherence to a specific value, the freedom of the individual. The realist's task was to create values.

Brandes championed realism in an attempt to bring modernity to the social life of Scandinavian society. The ideal role of the Brandesian author was that of any agent of change for he conceived the realist author as a man of his times, an educator, a shaper of values, and a critic of social relationships. It is only a short distance from these concepts to Brandes' notion of *aristocratic radicalism*. It is this concept that structures his essay on Nietzsche in 1888. Brandes' own work reflects this typology as well. He wrote about the personalities of the men who he believed shaped their times. It was as if he were saying that *the only history worth writing is the history of those individuals who contribute to change*,

nality of the environment is doubled and masked as interiority. Brandes sees Ibsen's *Brand* in a similar light, as a protest against prevailing conditions that doubles these conditions through its protest, thereby creating a cultural event that contributes to the containment and normalization of the self-same protest.

the aristocratic radicals, the men who oppose prevailing thought and reject it – in the name of reality. Implicit in his theory of realism was the thought that individuals make history and collective reality is born from the efforts of exemplary men, »det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd«.³⁸

Bang's notion of a mimetic depiction of actuality was form driven. In Bang's conception, realism is a result of an internalization of the form of social relationships and a subsequent individuation of the experience of this form through a perspective that factors in the conditions of modern life. As he saw the effect of these conditions as a fragmentation of an individual's understanding of the world, his species of realism delimited the realist claim for verisimilitude. For Bang understood realism as a process that reduces the totality of life, and the realist subsequently presents the reader with a text that represents a fragment and not an actuality. His understanding about what is *real* about realism can be drawn from this postulation – *historical conditions cannot be understood, they can only be reproduced by using a form appropriate to the times, the use of this form reflects the delimitation of understanding in the modern world.* In other words, the only aspect of life that can be represented is already an interpretation, and an aesthetic interpretation at that. Bang's realism admitted to its own status as an approximation. He posited a type of perspectivalism, which he then labeled as a depiction of the *real*.

Fiction, for Bang, had historical value. It maintains continuity despite the evanescent quality of modern social forms. It preserves the fragments of reality and as a result, realism accentuates the limitations of its own claim to represent an actuality. From Bang's perspective, the possibilities of modernity allow only what Nietzsche would call *perspectival seeing*; as a result, he considered the assignment of universal value to a character as a species of idealism. The authority of a realist perspective resides in the creative individual and »reality« is re-created from the individual perspective. The novel is a fragment of history, a fragment that is filtered through the sentient individual. Taken to the extremities of this logic, literary realism is a product of the autobiography of an author's perceptions.

The differences between Brandes and Bang's positions on realism can be abstracted further in order to illustrate the fundamental disagreement

³⁸ *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* is the title of Brandes' book on the authors of the modern breakthrough. Published in 1883, the book is a series of portraits.

between the two men on the relationship of the individual artist and his art to his culture and its history. For Brandes, the space of realism was the contemporary social world in its function as a prelude to a future. Realism demands engagement in the public sphere. For Bang, realism was determined by the accuracy of the depiction of phenomena by the perceiving subject. The location of realism lies within the creative artist, residing within his memory.

Brandes called for the realist to actively engage his contemporary world. By virtue of this demand for the artist to contribute to social change while depicting his environment, we can understand that Brandes favored a view of the present with an eye directed towards the future. For Bang, the perspective of the modern author was fragmented by the acceleration of his perception of the present. As a result, Bang called on the realist to rely on the capital of his stored experience. The realist then depicts his experience as preserved in the storehouse of memory. The realist sees the present with one eye directed towards his own past. Bang's postulation that the role of realism is to set familiar things in a new light is congruent with this notion of the time of realism.

It follows that while both men saw realism as an embodied rather than an abstract form of representation, their respective positions on realist space and time inform us how their notion of what is abstract differed. For Brandes, the embodiment of realism was in the body politic, the social world, and the public sphere. The individual in isolation is the abstract term, because for Brandes the isolated individual was not free. Bang placed what is real in the perceiving subject. He considered any claim to be able to depict social relations in an objective manner to be both an abstraction and a symptom of idealism.

As a result there was a radical difference in how each critic depicts the role of the author. Brandes gave the author an active role in the creation of a collective memory yet to be established. His species of realism is an avant-garde gesture, entering life and simultaneously depicting what is *real* and changing the shape of what will be perceived as *real* in the future. The writer is a creator of values. Bang saw the role of the realist author in a different light. The realist's task is to purge the collective memory of abstract value-laden judgments of things that persist. Bang advocated a type of perspectival positivism. The writer is a chronicler of a perspective.

Because of their respective positions on these issues, Brandes and Bang's notions of realism expressed divergent understandings of the historical process. Brandes saw his contemporary world as a time of historical rupture in which political values expressed in works of literature could re-form the mode of social intercourse, and Bang regarded modernity as part of a progressive movement of increasing individuality where the conditions of possibility for human understanding are historically bound. In modern times, these historical conditions lead to a fragmentation from which aesthetic judgment can provide a fictional notion of form. Brandes sought to radically alter the course of Scandinavian history, Bang sought to change perceptions in order to conserve an understanding of social discourse as it »actually« exists. Brandes' program for the modern breakthrough can be seen as a politics of aesthetics; Bang's theory of realism can be seen as the separation of aesthetic judgment from the spheres of political consideration and ethical determination.

Bang's argument for a type of perspectival positivism anticipates the withdrawal of many of the Scandinavian authors from the notion of a political realism. His postulation that the novel acts as a historical document, which gives the fragmented perceptions of modern life an aesthetic shape, assumed that the realist has the ability to make stylistic choices free of values. The weakness of this position lies in the realization that even stylistic choices are value laden. The literary polemicists of the nineties would not repeat Bang's mistake. They would also rebel against Brandes' notion of a politically active authorship, and would confront Brandes' values with an alternative set of values that emphasize the individual and national identity.

The problems inherent in these two realist positions open the door for the reaction that followed. Neither position was abandoned completely, but aspects of both were sublated in the emerging forms of literary production. Brandes' notion of a vitalistic literature capable of creating values and Bang's conception of an aestheticized depiction of *real life* both remained present in a literary production that claimed to reject their respective positions. Brandes' realism was literature that represented a trajectory of thought. His notion of literature was interest driven, politically motivated, and interventionist; it contained the notion of the poet as the unseen legislator of the future. While the political component of Brandesian realism will be blatantly rejected by the generation of the nineties, the vitalistic component will be retained. Bang's notion that

»reality« cannot be perceived in its totality and that realism is located in the individual proved to be fertile ground as well. While his prohibition against moral judgment would be honored, his claim of a value-free art was rejected. In a sense, the anti-realist discourse sublated aspects of both Brandes' and Bang's positions; it retained the idea that literature was a vital force that could combat decadence, although Brandes' notion of social antagonism would either be translated into a disengaged sense of hierarchy or it would be turned inwards. In any case the seeds that gestate in the realist discourse bear fruit in an activated authorial subject who seeks to overcome the decadence of his historical moment through the primacy of form over content. In them gestated the idea of the creation of a »select reality«.

Excursus:

A Brief Word on Strindberg, Autobiography, and Realism

Der beste Autor. – Der beste Autor wird der sein, welcher sich schämt, Schriftsteller zu werden.

(The best author. – The best author will be he who is ashamed to become a writer.)³⁹

August Strindberg's relationship to realism, and in his case, in a stricter sense, naturalism, was as complicated as any other aspect of his work. Early on in his career, he was interested in the work of the French realists and as early as 1875 Strindberg wanted to translate Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.⁴⁰ His debut novel, *Röda rummet* (*The Red Room*),⁴¹ has been called the north's first naturalistic »samhällsroman« (social novel)⁴² and it is apparent that Strindberg's early production answered Brandes' call to actively engage in social debate. Strindberg wrote history and social criticism proper as well. However, a seminal influence is impossible to discern due to Strindberg's voracious appetite for ideas. He read extensively in the natural sciences, history, and philosophy. A list of his literary influ-

³⁹ NIETZSCHE: KSA 2, 1988b, 164, Book 1, Aphorism 192. The English translation comes from HOLLINGDALE: 1996, 93.

⁴⁰ See LAMM: 1963, 63.

⁴¹ *The Red Room*, Strindberg's breakthrough novel, was first published in 1879.

⁴² LAMM: 1963, 64. The original citation reads »... samhällsroman och i denna egenskap tjäna som mönster för senare författare som Kielland och Garborg.« »Samhällsroman« is difficult to translate, but it is best rendered as »social novel«.

ences would have to include Balzac, Daudet, Dickens, Flaubert, Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Zola, and the American humorists among others.

In the essay *Om realism* (*On Realism*), which first was published in the Swedish journal *Ur dagens krönika* in 1882 and later collected in *Likt och olik* in 1890, Strindberg went so far as to say: »Världens största författare hava varit realister.« (The world's greatest authors have been realists.)⁴³ At this point in his career, he understood realism to be a technique that responded to human understanding in the epoch it depicted. He saw the necessity for a critical realism in his own time as he considered himself to be living »mitt i den epok, som fått sitt namn från Amerika, humbugens« (in the midst of that epoch, which got its name from America, the time of Humbug).⁴⁴ The realist response to this was, in Strindberg's meaning, the excoriation of the ideal. He reasoned: »Våra herrar idealister hava bedragit oss, därför övergavo vi dem!« (Our Kind sirs the idealists have cheated us, so therefore we have abandoned them!)⁴⁵ Like Brandes and Bang, he saw the opposition to be between realism and idealism. Like Brandes, Strindberg's opposition to idealism was political. He believed that the idealists justified the institutionalization of hypocrisies that were foisted upon society by the interests of the upper class.⁴⁶ For this reason, a realist abandoned the aesthetics of the beautiful for »de hava lärt oss att vämjäs vid det slags skönhet, som äger sin tillvaro på andras bekostnad« (they [the idealists] have taught us to be disgusted by this type of beauty that owes its very existence to the price paid by others).⁴⁷

It was in this essay that Strindberg would give one of his earliest definitions of naturalism:

Man har beskylld våra realister att vara något ändå värre: naturalister. Det är en, hederstitel för oss! Vi älska naturen. Vi vända oss med vämjelse från de nya samhällsförhållanden, från polisstaten, från militärstaten, som säger sig värna

43 From »Om realismen« (*On Realism*) collected in STRINDBERG: 1912, 194.

44 Ibid., 195. Strindberg also uses this term in his satirical social critique, *Det nya riket* (*The New Kingdom*, 1881).

45 STRINDBERG: 1912, 195.

46 See »August Strindbergs Lilla katekes för underklassen« printed in *Likt och olik I* (1884). An example of Strindberg's reasoning: »Vad är historia? Berättelsen om det forflutna, försåvitt det framställes i en för överklassen förmånlig dager.« My translation. »What is history? The narrative about the past, provided that it is presented in an advantageous light for the upper class.« Found in STRINDBERG: 1912, 186.

47 STRINDBERG: 1912, 196, *Om realismen*.

nationen, men endast skyddar de styrande; därför att vi hatar det förkonstlade, tillskarvade, älska vi *att nämna vår sak vid dess namn*, och vi tro att samhällen skola störta samman om icke den första överenskommelse, på vilken samhällena vila, ärligheten, blir återställd.

(People have accused our realists of being something even worse: naturalists. That is a mantle of honor for us! We love nature. We turn away from the new social order with disgust, away from the police state, away from the military state, which claims to protect the nation, but only shields the ruling class. Because we hate the artificial, the manufactured, we love to *name our cause by its name*, and we believe that society will come crashing down if the first agreement, on which society rests, honesty, is not restored.)⁴⁸

For Strindberg, naturalism was a form of realism that valorized the »natural«. His early understanding thus reveals itself to be inflected by Rousseau's notion of the social contract.⁴⁹ Strindberg saw naturalism as an unmasking that pointed to a return to the »honesty« of the *originary* agreement that bound people together in a society. Naturalism was a form of realism that was necessitated by the corruption of beauty and ideals by the »humbug« of the prevailing social order.

Furthermore, Strindberg argued that the naturalist depicts life in a way that *names things by their rightful names*. This is an important aspect of his early understanding of the role of the author and the meaning of naturalism. In a fractured social climate, the naturalist combats the hypocrisy of the ruling classes by giving things their proper appellation. This act of naming recalls the basic justification for human society; for the early Strindberg, honesty is the main component of the social contract and the naturalist writes for the cause of reinstating truthfulness as the guiding principle of social relations. The association between calling a thing by its right name and the desire to reinstate the primal conditions for the legitimation of the state can be found elsewhere in Strindberg's production in 1882. The poem *Solnedgång på havet* (Sundown at Sea), written in the same year, is a prime example. Though Strindberg temporarily subordinated his social activism to autobiographical concerns in the mid-1880's, the tension between naming and selective forgetfulness is an important component of his naturalism and provides a window through which we can view his agonistic notion of subject formation where the individual combats the internalization of an inherited histori-

⁴⁸ Ibid., 196. My emphasis.

⁴⁹ See EDQVIST: 1961, especially 89–101.

cal narrative. Even when Strindberg turned inward, the stakes remain the same.

This brings us to Strindberg's conception of the relationship between naturalism and autobiography. Strindberg wrote a mock interview that he intended to be the preface to the first part of his »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*).⁵⁰ His publisher, Bonniers forced Strindberg to repress this preface and the manuscript is extant in the archives.⁵¹ Strindberg had used the same technique two years before in *Giftas 1* (*Getting Married 1*), and these two »interviews« provide us with some insight into the progression of his own understanding of his art. It is this understanding that enabled Strindberg to consider himself a naturalist, and to be used by others as a trope in the anti-realist discourse.

Each of these interviews has two characters, an »interviewer« and the »author«. The interview in *Giftas 1* starts ironically with the two characters inhabiting antagonistic positions. The *author* states that literature is inconsequential and the *interviewer* chides him for deriding *belles lettres* while authoring books himself. The *author* admits that this is true and he states that he regards himself to be inconsequential by extension. Then, the *author* tells of his plans to give up literature because he is tired of guessing what people think. He claims that the remedy for his lack of consequence resides in his desire to become an interviewer himself for then he could ask questions directly. The *author* then turns the tables and asks the *interviewer* if he liked his book. The *interviewer* responds that the book is badly written, that it is fragmented.⁵² The *author* agrees with a difference so to speak:

Om herrn visste hur rätt herrn har! Den är inte utförd! Det var just meningen det. Jag hade nämligen för avsikt att skildra ett rätt stort antal fall, vanliga fall, av förhållandet mellan man och hustru, ville icke skildra fyra undantagsfall som fru Edgren, eller ett vidunders fall som Ibsen, vilka sedan tagas såsom norm för alla fall. Därför har jag icke utfört mer än en sexa på Stallmästargården, där ni har två sorters lax, med dill, färska pressgurkor, små

⁵⁰ Autobiography is set in quotation marks here for reasons that will become more apparent as this study progresses. At this moment suffice it to say that *Tjänstekvinnans son* is a *genealogy of self*.

⁵¹ It is also reprinted on pp. 370–375 of the National Edition of his collected works. See STRINDBERG: 1989.

⁵² The phrase the interviewer uses reads: »Jag tycker för det första att den är illa gjord. Den är inte utförd.« This translates as: Firstly, I think that it is poorly done. It is not completed.« STRINDBERG: 1982a, 9.

biffstekar med spansk lök, kyckling och jordgubbar. Dessutom har jag kräftor (honkräftor) på Rejners, pannkakor på Djurgården; en trädgård på Norrtullsgatan med ett blommande äppelträd, sex sorters blommor och ett par nattskärar. Vidare har jag Adolf Fredricks kyrka och en florett och minst trettio sjömanstermer, som jag tagit ur nautisk ordbok! Är det icke realistiskt, va?

(If the gentleman only knew how right he is! It isn't whole! That was the intention! I had the intention, namely, to depict a large number of case studies, common cases, of the relationship between man and wife. I did not want to depict four exceptional cases like Mrs. Edgren or a miraculous case like Ibsen, which later is taken to be the norm in all cases. Therefore, I haven't executed anything more than supper at Stallmästergården, where you have two types of salmon with dill, fresh pickles, small beef steaks with Spanish onions, chicken, and strawberries. Furthermore, I have crayfish (the hen) at Rejners, pancakes on Djurgården; a garden at Norrtulls Street with an apple tree in bloom, six kinds of flowers and a pair of nightjars. In addition, I have Adolf Fredrik's Church and a fencing foil, and at least thirty sailor's terms that I took from a nautical dictionary, Isn't that realistic, huh?)⁵³

The irony is pointed and unmistakable. Our citation starts out straightforward enough; the *author* has the intention of depicting a series of case studies on marriage. Realism is not the exceptional or the miraculous and he has no intention of depicting anything but the ordinary. Then irony creeps into the discourse. The *author* piles up inconsequential details in order to show that the names of physical properties do not realism make. This dense descriptive passage is intended to prove that the »reality effect,« the representation of known aspects of the real world in a fictional universe, does not signify the *real*. This raises a question: if the created illusion of an environment's materiality does not connote the *real*, what does?

The *author* provides us with a glimpse of an answer when he responds to the *interviewer's* accusation that his book is immoral. He submits that »om sedligheten är vad den blivit, ett brott emot naturen, då är min bok osedlig, ty den är enligt och efter naturen« (if morality is what it has become, a crime against nature, then my book is immoral, for it is also according to and taken after nature).⁵⁴ The *author*, who expressed that he was unable to guess what people thought, analyzed human behavior through depicting the contradictions between social conventions and what he understood to be natural drives. For Strindberg, Naturalism did

⁵³ Ibid., 9–10.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

not imitate prevailing morality and did not hold social relationships up to a mirror. It was not an effect of that which could be seen. He claimed that Naturalism depicts that which drives human behavior in conflict with that which inhibits desire. The *real* was not an image of thought. It could not be recognized in the exteriority of the world inhabited by both the author and the reader.

As mentioned, Strindberg was to later employ a similar dialogic strategy to introduce his »autobiography,« *Tjänstekvinnans son*. He set up this second fictional interview in the same manner as in the introduction to *Giftas* I. The »dialog« starts out with an attempt to define what type of book *Tjänstekvinnans son* might be and progresses into a heated discussion about the nature of the *author's* opposition against »den nuvarande samhället« (contemporary society).⁵⁵ After the author's screed, the *interviewer* returns to the subject of how to define the book. He says: »Det är ingen roman; det skall sålunda vara något nytt.« (This is no novel; therefore it would be something new.)⁵⁶ The *author* responds that it is an attempt at a literature of the future. He continues by damning and praising Zola, who is called a great master, and who, according to the *author*, had overestimated the effect of an environment on the development of the individual. The *author* reasons as follows:

Hur skall man veta vad som passerar i andras hjärnor, hur skall man veta de invecklade motiven till en annans handling, hur kan man veta vad de sade i en förtrolig stund? Jo, man konstruerar. Men hittills har homologien, vetenskapen om människan, varit litet odlad av författarne, som med tarvlig kunskaper i psykologien givit sig ut på skildring av det så väl dolda själslivet. *Man känner icke mer än ett liv, sitt eget.*

(How would one know what passes through another's brain, how would one know the complicated motives behind another's action, how can one know what another said and did in an intimate moment? Sure, one constructs. But up to now homology, the science of man, has been hardly cultivated by authors, who with vulgar knowledge of psychology have thrown themselves at depicting the well concealed life of the soul. *One knows no more than one life, his own.*)⁵⁷

With this insight, Strindberg had found his *gaya scienza*, his naturalism as memoir, where the conflicting forces of nature and society could be displayed in intimate struggle within the one person that he felt it was

55 STRINDBERG: 1989, 370–371.

56 Ibid., 372.

57 Ibid., 373. My emphasis.

possible to know, himself.⁵⁸ Bang's notion that realism resides in the individual perspective had become so radicalized in Strindberg's work that he could not even consider the possibility of being able to depict another except in relationship to himself. Brandes' notion of the external struggle of »life-affirming« and »decadent« historical trajectories would be pushed to their extreme and depicted as the factors in the development of the »soul«.⁵⁹

With the writing of his »autobiography,« Strindberg's concerns turned to the understanding of his own behavior and motivations; he turned his gaze inwards in an attempt to discover *how one becomes who he is*. It is here in *Tjänstekvinnans son* that the notion of the *genealogy of self* took root in Strindberg's work, and it is here that we can discern that he understood self-description as being highly compatible with his understanding of naturalism, which he understood to be a species of realism. This explains how Strindberg would later find his authorship's theoretical justification in Nietzsche's work and still considers himself to be a realist.

Even during his »Nietzschean« period, Strindberg found his own appropriation of the philosopher's writings to be compatible with naturalism. The form of this compatibility can be found in Strindberg's notion of *greater naturalism*. A clearly rendered definition of this term can be found in the essay *Om Modernt drama och modern teater* (On Modern Drama and Modern Theater)⁶⁰, published in *Ny jord* in 1889, written shortly after his encounter with Nietzsche. Strindberg writes that through »den stora naturalism« (the greater naturalism) the *greater naturalist* is one who

söker de punkter, där de stora slagen stå, som älska se det man icke får se vardag, som glädjes åt naturmakernas kamp, antingen dessa makter heter kärlek och hat, revoltandet eller sociabla instinkter, som finner skönt eller fullt likgiltigt, endast det är stort.

(seeks those points where the great battles take place, who loves to see that which one does not get to see everyday, who enjoys the struggle of natural forces whether these forces are called love and hate, revolt or the instinct for

58 Babette E. Babich defines Nietzsche's gay science as an »alliance of science (necessity) and art (creativity) ...« Here, Strindberg pays heed to the necessity of scientifically inflected self-observation in order to create a merger of the fictional and autobiographical in an artistic manner. See Babich's »Nietzsche's ›Gay‹ Science« in ANSELL-PEARSON: 2006, 97.

59 Strindberg uses the word »själ« or soul.

60 »Om modernt drama och modern teater« is collected in STRINDBERG: 1912, 281–303.

sociability, who finds beauty and ugliness to be a matter of indifference, providing that the struggle is great.)⁶¹

With this formulation, Strindberg's conception of naturalism had transmuted. The *greater naturalist* seeks out the great struggles that are masked by the banality of the everyday. He is beyond the beautiful and the repulsive, a master of the *grand style* of the constant collisions that lie beneath daily life, and he names this struggle by its *proper* name. It is my contention that Strindberg's conception of *greater naturalism* arose out of his own notion of subject formation developed in the writing of *Tjänstekvinnans son* and further articulated in his *Vivesektioner*. This is an essential point of his later claim to have anticipated Nietzsche and an indication of the futility of using an influence model to describe the encounter between the two.

Strindberg's understanding of naturalism as a collision between socially embedded narratives and primal drives helps to explain why he was able to find compatibility between naturalism and Nietzsche despite the latter's general antipathy towards Zola⁶² and the naturalist movement. We now turn to Nietzsche's initial reception in Scandinavia and the anti-realist discourse in order to illustrate how both Nietzsche and Strindberg enjoyed a discursive commonality as they came to represent both continuity and renewal; thereby straddling the abyss opened by the aporia of modern realism. Strindberg, like Nietzsche, had become ashamed of being an author thereby becoming a vivisectionist. Like Nietzsche, he had turned his scalpel on himself.

61 Ibid., 289.

62 Nietzsche's attitude towards Zola was actually rather ambivalent. Julian Young argues that while Nietzsche thought that Zola's concentration on the ugly was a depressive element, he also reasoned that the pleasure that Zola gained from this fascination was admirable. See YOUNG: 1994, 131–134. See also Reinhold GRIMM: 1983, »The Hidden Heritage: Reprecussions of Nietzsche in Modern Theater and Its Theory.« Grimm remarks on pg. 356: »Of course, Nietzsche and Naturalism differ enormously; yet likewise, we have to realize that they were not merely opposed to each other, but rather complemented each other. And not only did they interact, they were able to merge ...«